

Remarks to U.S.-Pakistan Higher Education Initiative on Civic Engagement  
Ambassador Richard Olson  
July 1, 2013  
National University of Science and Technology

Federal Minister of Science and Technology Zahid Hamid,  
HEC Executive Director Ahmed,  
NUST Rector Asghar,  
Mr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Founding Dean of Aga Khan University and advisor to this project,  
Susan Stroud and the ICP team,  
Rob Hollister, Director of the Talloires Network,  
Members of delegations from the United States,  
Members of delegations from their Pakistani partners,

Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
AssalamuAlaikum.

It is a privilege to be here today to honor the ongoing educational cooperation between Pakistan and the United States. We are joined by partners from many of the Embassy's most important educational projects. I am honored to be among you, working to strengthen ties, increase mutual understanding, and contribute to the positive development of Pakistan's great potential.

Today we celebrate the culmination of a project linking top Pakistani universities with top U.S. universities for the purpose of strengthening civic engagement in higher education. In addition to its educational benefits, inculcating the value of service in the next generation has the power to change lives and change nations.

The Higher Education Initiative for Civic Participation has used faculty exchange and curriculum development to allow participants to learn from each other and to take concrete steps to infuse volunteerism and civic engagement into their academic programs. Perhaps more importantly, these universities have established ties and avenues for cooperation and exchange that will live on beyond this particular project.

Throughout the past year, you engaged hundreds of students in civic and community engagement projects, including free dental and eye clinics in Karachi and here at NUST. You trained over one hundred faculty in how to better promote civic participation. You promoted cross-cultural discussions on women's issues between students at Fatima Jinnah Women's University and Tulane University. And you formed the Pakistani chapter of the Talloires (*tal whar*) Network to continue to build upon these successes.

The United States and Pakistan are working together as partners toward a brighter future for the people of Pakistan in many ways, including through education. Unlocking every young person's full potential with a quality education is one of our top assistance priorities. Together, we are carrying out comprehensive education programs that help Pakistan's children and young people rise as far as their hard work and initiative will take them.

Many of the largest, most successful educational exchange programs that the United States supports anywhere in the world are right here in Pakistan.

Our 60-year-long partnership in one of our most enduring and prestigious educational exchange programs worldwide, the Fulbright Exchange Program, has developed into the largest in the world, with nearly 200 Masters and Ph.D. students receiving full scholarships each year. In those six decades, more than 4,000 Pakistanis and Americans have participated in Fulbright exchanges.

Education is the key to future prosperity and economic growth. Pakistan, like all countries, needs a workforce with the knowledge and skills to compete in today's global marketplace. Our goal is to help 3.2 million children read at or above their grade level. Together with the Government of Pakistan, we developed accredited degree programs in teaching that currently enroll more than 2,600 future teachers. We are building or rehabilitating nearly 800 schools, benefiting 62,000 school children.

We are also increasing access to higher education. More than 10,600 low-income students have attended college at home in Pakistan as a result of U.S.-funded scholarships. Together with the Government of Pakistan, we are establishing Centers for Advanced Studies at three Pakistani universities. These universities will be linked in partnership with American universities to focus on applied research in agriculture, energy, and water.

Each year, the American Embassy sends over 1,000 Pakistanis to the United States on a variety of academic and professional exchange programs. Young teenage students study for one year in our high schools; undergraduate students study at universities from six weeks to one year. Graduate students complete research in energy and water conservation, business management, and education and health policy; and mid-career professionals meet their American counterparts on shorter-term programs to share information and ideas.

We also have expanded our program that links American and Pakistani universities to carry out faculty exchange and curriculum development over three years. We have already launched eight such partnerships and have eleven more in the works.

That is a substantial list, but there is still much more to do. We are convinced that nothing can substitute for people-to-people contacts, especially through education, to increase mutual understanding.

This is why we support this higher education initiative. This project was conceived here in Pakistan in response to a need Pakistani universities identified themselves to strengthen civic participation curriculum in their institutions of higher education. It is our great privilege to work together with you in this great undertaking.

While the challenges you face will be large, we promise to continue work together with you and build a brighter future for both of our countries. I look forward to learning about your successes.

Thank you.

Khuda Hafez.